

brain the truth about us—
her great
ungainly hips and flopping breasts

45

addressed to cheap
jewelry
and rich young men with fine eyes

as if the earth under our feet
were
an excrement of some sky

50

and we degraded prisoners
destined
to hunger until we eat filth

while the imagination strains
after deer
going by fields of goldenrod in

55

the stifling heat of September
Somehow
it seems to destroy us

60

It is only in isolate flecks that
something
is given off

No one
to witness
and adjust, no one to drive the car

65

1923

The Red Wheelbarrow¹

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

5

beside the white
chickens

1923

1. Numbered XXII in *Spring and All*.

The Dead Baby

Sweep the house
 under the feet of the curious
 holiday seekers—
 sweep under the table and the bed
 the baby is dead—

5

The mother's eyes where she sits
 by the window, unconsolated—
 have purple bags under them
 the father—
 tall, wellspoken, pitiful
 is the abler of these two—

10

Sweep the house clean
 here is one who has gone up
 (though problematically)
 to heaven, blindly
 by force of the facts—
 a clean sweep
 is one way of expressing it—

15

Hurry up! any minute
 they will be bringing it
 from the hospital—
 a white model of our lives
 a curiosity—
 surrounded by fresh flowers

20

1927, 1935

This Is Just to Say

I have eaten
 the plums
 that were in
 the icebox

and which
 you were probably
 saving
 for breakfast

5

Forgive me
 they were delicious
 so sweet
 and so cold

10

1934

rallying cries, blocks for them
and knocks down

the unseeing bullets of
the storm. Green spruce boughs
pulled down by a weight of
snow—Transformed!

Violence leaped and appeared.
Recreant! roared to life
as the flame rose through and
our eyes recoiled from it.

In the jagged flames green
to red, instant and alive. Green!
those sure abutments . . . Gone!
lost to mind

and quick in the contracting
tunnel of the grate
appeared a world! Black
mountains, black and red—as

yet uncolored—and ash white,
an infant landscape of shimmering
ash and flame and we, in
that instant, lost,

breathless to be witnesses,
as if we stood
ourselves refreshed among
the shining fauna of that fire.

1944

Landscape with the Fall of Icarus¹

According to Brueghel²
when Icarus fell
it was spring

a farmer was ploughing
his field
the whole pageantry

1. In Greek mythology, a young man whose father made wings for him with feathers held together by wax. Icarus flew too close to the sun, the wax melted, and he fell into the sea and drowned.

2. A landscape by Flemish painter Pieter Brueghel the Elder (c. 1525–1569) in which Icarus is depicted by a tiny leg sticking out of the sea in one corner of the picture.

of the year was
 awake tingling
 near

the edge of the sea
 concerned
 with itself

10

sweating in the sun
 that melted
 the wings' wax

15

insignificantly
 off the coast
 there was

a splash quite unnoticed
 this was
 Icarus drowning

20

1962

EZRA POUND

1885-1972

Ezra Loomis Pound was born in Hailey, Idaho. When he was still an infant his parents settled in a comfortable suburb near Philadelphia where his father was an assayer at the regional branch of the U.S. Mint. "I knew at fifteen pretty much what I wanted to do," he wrote in 1913; what he wanted was to become a poet. He had this goal in mind as an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania (where he met and became lifelong friends with William Carlos Williams and had a romance with Hilda Doolittle, who was later to become the poet H.D.) and at Hamilton College; it also motivated his graduate studies in languages—French, Italian, Old English, and Latin—at the University of Pennsylvania, where he received an M.A. in 1906. He planned to support himself as a college teacher while writing.

The poetry that he had in mind in these early years was in vogue at the turn of the twentieth century—melodious in versification and diction, romantic in themes, world-weary in tone—poetry for which the term *decadent* was used. A particular image of the poet went with such poetry: the poet committed to art for its own sake, careless of convention, and continually shocking the respectable middle class. A rebellious and colorful personality, Pound delighted in this role but quickly found that it was not compatible with the sober behavior expected from professors of language. He lost his first teaching job, at Wabash College in Indiana, in fewer than six months.

Convinced that his country had no place for him—and that a country with no place for him had no place for art—he went to Europe in 1908. He settled in London